

MASTER PLAN
MAY 2011

CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK



N.C. DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION



Hickory Nut Falls

MASTER PLAN
APRIL 2011

CHIMNEY ROCK STATE PARK



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...AND THE COUNTLESS CITIZENS WHO
 HAVE SUPPORTED AND CONTINUE TO
 SUPPORT THE PARK.



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Recreation

Beverly Eaves Perdue,

Lewis R. Ledford, Director

Dee Freeman, Secretary

April 27, 2011

Friends and Supporters of Chimney Rock State Park:

The recently established Chimney Rock State Park encompasses one of North Carolina's most iconic landscapes and offers tremendous potential and challenges for creating a world-class state park within the Hickory Nut Gorge. The intent of the state park system has been to craft a 100-year vision, a 25-year master plan and a five-year action plan. The master plan builds upon the unique history of the region while combining natural resource protection with public enjoyment.

Authorized by the 2005 N.C. General Assembly, the state park has grown to more than 4,000 acres, including its signature landmark purchased in 2007 from the Morse family who owned and operated the 996-acre Chimney Rock Park tourist destination. Throughout the land acquisition process – which is ongoing – the park has received significant support from the General Assembly, nonprofit land conservancies, the state's conservation trust funds, nearby communities and North Carolina's citizens.

Aside from the abundance of rare species and habitats, Chimney Rock State Park offers outstanding outdoor experiences, including spectacular vistas from Chimney Rock Mountain and an extensive network of trails for all skill levels. Visitors can hike to the base of Hickory Nut Falls, one of the highest waterfalls in the eastern United States, and enjoy a myriad of special events. The state parks system will continue to work in partnership with local communities and regional stakeholders to support activities, events and visitor opportunities in this cherished tourism destination.

This master plan is a blueprint for long-term development of facilities and protection of critically important natural resources. Such a plan is an organic document that evolves as the park grows and knowledge is gained about the resources and public use. With the plan's completion, Chimney Rock State Park enters a new era with a bold vision. Greenways Inc., a Durham-based landscape architecture firm, developed this master plan in full consultation with state parks staff and the community through a participatory planning process. The result is a long-range, attainable plan balancing outdoor recreation and stewardship.

At all state parks, we are committed to our mission of protecting natural resources, educating our visitors about those resources, and providing quality outdoor recreation. Chimney Rock State Park offers us an outstanding opportunity to fulfill those objectives. That commitment, the continued support of our partners and thoughtful planning will combine for a lasting legacy.

Sincerely,

Lewis R. Ledford

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SUMMARY OF THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

The purpose of a master plan is to serve as a long-term guide for the development of park facilities, recreation opportunities, and natural resource protection. It includes an analysis of cultural, scenic, recreational, geologic, and natural resources as well as site conditions, public demand and interest, and development recommendations. The master plan is structured within the scope of a 25-year development plan, and is intended to evolve as the park grows and more knowledge is gained about the park's natural resources.

Shortly after the acquisition of Chimney Rock Park by the State of North Carolina in 2005, the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation selected Greenways Incorporated of Durham, N.C. as the design consultant for preparation of the park's first master plan. Greenways Incorporated and their engineering subconsultant, McKim and Creed, P.A., were charged with examining Chimney Rock State Park as a whole and evaluating opportunities and constraints for proposed park facilities. The consultant team performed a thorough site inventory and analysis in order to fully understand the existing conditions of the park as well as future park development opportunities. Existing regional planning documents were examined, as well as recreational usage trends based on the North Carolina Outdoor Recreation Plan 2009-2013. Most importantly, the consultant worked closely with the N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation staff to refine a program of use for the park.

Three initial design alternatives were publicly presented in May 2010. The alternatives differed primarily in the extent of development proposed (see Chapter 8: Proposed Park Alternatives). The public was invited to attend an open house meeting held at the Town of Lake Lure. Public comment was also received via U.S. mail and email. All comments received were compiled and are part of this master plan. The input received was instructive and was used to guide the master planning effort. A draft master plan was developed to incorporate public comment and staff input. Upon completion of the draft master plan, a second public comment period commenced on November 29 and concluded on December 13, 2010. State parks staff and the planning team also made a presentation of the draft master plan to the Chimney Rock State Park Advisory Committee.

Finally, this master plan was developed in response to a specific program of public access, natural resource protection, and use that is consistent with other North Carolina State Parks. The planning team also took into consideration the unique opportunities and constraints of the Hickory Nut Gorge region. The master plan is based upon the best mapping data available at the time of its preparation (See Resources and References: Digital Mapping Data). This data is not survey quality; therefore, more detailed soil, geotechnology, topographic, hydrological, ecological and other studies may be warranted in future phases of design in order to fully assess feasibility. Since planning is a dynamic process, the availability of more detailed information over time may result in a final built product that is different than that depicted in this master plan.



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